RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

April 2004

Socio-economic Series 04-021

RESIDENTIAL INTEGRATION OF YOUTH MIGRANTS IN QUEBEC

INTRODUCTION

This research report examines the housing integration of youth who migrate from city to city or region to region within Quebec. It provides a profile of Quebec youth migration, and describes the circumstances of why youth leave their communities of origin and how they find new housing at their destination communities. It examines the role that housing may play in decisions and projects regarding future mobility.

This report identifies the problems encountered by young people, and the strategies and support available to help them meet their housing requirements. The study of residential integration in the context of migration is particularly justified because youth who leave their parents' homes to live elsewhere find themselves distanced from those people most likely to assist and support them during a period of life usually marked by low income and difficulty in finding employment.

A large number of youth in Québec migrate from one administrative region[1] to another. This experience which affects close to one in two young people could be considered part of the process of attaining adulthood, of which residential integration is a cornerstone.

METHODOLOGY

The principal methodologies used to conduct this research were a literature review, semi-structured interviews with youth carried out in 1997 and, in particular, a survey of 5,518 respondents between 18 and 34 years old conducted in the winter of 1998-1999.

RESULTS

Literature Review

The literature demonstrates that migration is a life-event for which there are varying motives influenced by one's circumstances at any one period of time in the life span. These motives have changed since the era of 19th-century Quebec, particularly due to increasing levels of education. Leaving one's place of origin to pursue an education is a more common phenomenon for young women, as increasing numbers pursue a postsecondary education. The literature consulted also shows the importance of taking into account the age of migrants, as well as the type of communities to which they move. Migration from outlying areas to large cities may not parallel migration between two cities in the same region. Consideration of these differences can help in better understanding the migration process.

A Profile of Youth Migrants

The profile of survey respondents shows that a large number of Quebec youth have migrated at least once since leaving their parents' home; the type of mobility, however, varies:

- 47% of young people between 18 and 34 have migrated at least once outside their administrative region of birth, after having left their family home (interregional migration).
- 11% have migrated within their home region (intraregional migration).
- 21 % have moved within the same census community as their parents.
- 22% still remain in the family home.

1 The author is referring to the 17 administrative regions used by the Québec government for a variety of purposes, e.g. economic development, services provision. Examples are: Bas-Saint-Laurent, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, Montréal, Laval, etc.

63501

CMHC SCHL

HOME TO CANADIANS

Canada

A higher proportion of women than men migrate; men are more likely to live with their parents or in the same community as their parents. While approximately 55% of interregional and intraregional migrants are women, close to 60% of youth who remain in their parents' homes are men.

The level of migration tends to increase with the age and education of respondents. Young people whose parents migrated often or are employed in the professional or white collar sectors (professional, administrator, technician or office worker) are more likely to have migrated.

Why Leave?

An assessment of reasons for leaving one's region of origin shows that this process is the result of complex dynamics within the family and within the migrant's region of origin. Thus, the decision to leave can be the result of a desire for independence, a wish to pursue an education or to experience life in another area. In this sense, the residential integration of youth migrants exhibits major differences from that of non-migrants[2]. Migrants leave their parents' homes at a younger age than non-migrants. Almost six out of ten migrants leave before the age of 20, while this is true for only one third of non-migrants. In addition, while close to half of migrants leave their parents' homes to pursue an education, this reason is only given by 7% of non-migrants. Youth who do not migrate place independence ahead of education (close to 80% of cases) as the reason for leaving the family home. Only those migrant youth who leave home in their twenties indicate independence as the reason for leaving.

It is worth noting that, contrary to widespread belief, work is not a predominant reason given by youth for leaving their region. However, this issue can become a major one after finishing school, when job security becomes a problem. The profile of youth who migrate within their region is somewhat different: their main reason for doing so is to follow a spouse; education and work are secondary.

In general, migrants have little knowledge of the area, city or village to which they move. Forty percent of interregional migrants surveyed had no knowledge of their chosen destinations and three in four were not familiar with the neighbourhood in which they would be living. This situation can make their housing integration more tenuous, particularly in large cities. Being relatively young means that one has little experience in or knowledge of the housing market. Although the presence of friends and relatives in the area can help youth to better respond to potential difficulties, proximity of friends and family is more common for intraregional migrants.

Residential Integration in the New Community

For many youth migrating to a large city, arrival and integration into the new community proves to be a process fraught with worries and fear. For others, it is a fulfilling and satisfying experience both socially and culturally. Analysis of interview results clearly shows that some young people find themselves isolated and in a difficult situation in urban communities, but most eventually succeed in overcoming the initial obstacles. For these young people, housing is an essential aspect of social integration and financial independence in the new community. Co-tenancy and living as a couple, living in student residences and moving in with someone from one's place of origin are just some means of reducing living expenses and ensuring social relationships.

Survey results show that these strategies are fairly widespread, depending on the category of youth. Students and those who leave home before the age of 20 receive help from their parents in moving. The move often takes place at the same time as that of another person from the same community. Apartment life is the most common housing option (approximately 70% of migrants), with the apartment often being shared with others. In short, eight out of ten youth who migrate to pursue their education and seven out of ten who migrate for work, share accommodations, live as couples or live in a student residence. Close to 20% of migrants who left home at 18 tend to be renting rooms. These youth seem to be the most vulnerable, not only because of their lack of experience in the housing market, but also because of their low income.

Youth migrants must also rely on several sources of income to ensure their residential independence. The main source is employment, but this source is clearly insufficient for certain types of interregional youth migrants, i.e., young people who leave home before the age of 20 and students. Approximately three in four students depend on a second source of income, most often their parents, or loans and bursaries.

2 The author defines non-migrant as youth who have moved out of the parental home BUT to a residence in the same municipality as their parents and who have never left this municipality. A migrant means having left home to move to another distant municipality and/ or another administrative region.

Future Mobility and Housing

Although residential integration in a new community requires young migrants to adapt as best as they can and may pose major problems, housing issues also play a role in future mobility. The survey shows that many youth prefer suburban or country life to life in the city, seen as noisier and sometimes more threatening. In this sense, suburbs can represent both a community close to city activities and a quiet area for raising a family.

The attraction of owning a home can also influence future migration, along with the type of living environment desired. Desire for homeownership can cause migration back to one's place of origin. Although property access is only third or fourth on the list of possible reasons for returning, owning one's own home is a central reason among those who have in fact returned. As well, work, moving closer to family and friends and the birth of children are influencers.

CONCLUSIONS

The process of youth migration and residential integration is multi-faceted and entails many motives. Apart from identifying the specific aspects and consequences of residential integration in the context of youth migration, the study provides a certain number of recommendations to assist youth in the migratory process. The first deals with youth's knowledge of the new community and the vulnerability of some youth migrants upon arriving in a large city. Educational institutions could be called upon to play a larger role in informing youth of their rights and responsibilities as tenants as well as providing information about the communities to which youth are moving. More residences could also be built, particularly in the vicinity of urban universities located in areas experiencing housing shortages. Those youth migrants who are most vulnerable need help in becoming more stable, whether in finding employment, determining their educational goals or taking the time needed to find better housing. There are a few organizations that offer such assistance but they suffer from a chronic lack of funding.

The second consideration is the financial resources of youth migrants, particularly those who must leave home to pursue an education. Often the consequences of education-related migration is financial dependence on parents resulting in some measure of control, high student debts that may delay home ownership, and sometimes just insufficient income which disadvantages youth in the housing market. . Ways must be found of reducing housing costs for such youth who cannot benefit from living with their parents throughout their education, as do urban youth who don't leave home.

Finally, it may also be appropriate to examine how municipalities and regions can better appeal to youth migrants. Could not municipalities, experiencing declines in population, see housing as a means of attracting those youth who in fact wish to live in the suburbs or in the country, or who might consider returning to their community of origin? Re-examining and improving municipal policies dealing with recreation, housing costs and pre-school and school infrastructure are just some examples of actions that could be initiated to attract young families.

Project Officer: Jim Zamprelli

Consultant: Marc Molgat, Professor, School of Social Work, University of Ottawa
Member, Observatoire Jeunes et Société, INRS-UCS with the collaboration of Frédéric Deschenaux and Nathalie St-Laurent

This project was funded (or partially funded) by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) under the terms of the External Research Program (ERP), an annual research grant competition. The views expressed are the personal views of the author(s) and do not represent the official views of CMHC. For more information on the ERP, please visit the CMHC Web site **www.cmhc.ca** or contact the Project Officer, Responsive Programs by e-mail at erp@cmhc-schl.gc.ca, or by regular mail: Project Officer, Responsive Programs, External Research Program, Policy and Research Division, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 700 Montreal Road, Ottawa ON K1A 0P7.

To find more *Research Highlights* plus a wide variety of information products, visit our Web site at

www.cmhc.ca

or contact:

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
700 Montreal Road
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0P7

Phone: 1 800 668-2642
Fax: 1 800 245-9274

OUR WEB SITE ADDRESS: www.cmhc.ca

Although this information product reflects housing experts' current knowledge, it is provided for general information purposes only. Any reliance or action taken based on the information, materials and techniques described are the responsibility of the user. Readers are advised to consult appropriate professional resources to determine what is safe and suitable in their particular case. CMHC assumes no responsibility for any consequence arising from use of the information, materials and techniques described.